

TEACHING THE DEAF AND DUMB TO HEAR AND TALK

The Unique Course of Instruction at Gallaudet College Which Enables Those Who Have Never Heard or Uttered a Sound to Hear and Speak Well. * * *

BY WILLIAM H. F. BECKHAM.

THE wonderful work of teaching the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, an almost literal reproduction of the miracles of early days, that is being conducted within the confines of the National Capital is a revelation known to but few of this city's residents.

Under the scientific systems of treatment now in vogue, the deaf mute is rapidly becoming a person of the past, and the complete liberation of intelligent deaf from the thrall of mutism can be believed in when men, women and children, born both deaf and dumb, are heard to read aloud in an intelligent manner from the works of the great literary masters of the world.

At the Kendall primary school and the Columbian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, better known as Gallaudet College, both of which are supported by an annual appropriation from Congress, children who have never heard language write rapidly and freely from dictation by merely watching the teachers' lips. The teacher speaks in a soft voice with no more precision of pronunciation than is ordinarily used by the well educated.

Different From Other Children.

When one sees the children of the advanced grades, without knowing their affliction, one would not be able to guess that all of them are deaf and most of them had been born dumb, and none had ever heard sound. One would be touched by the wistful concentration and eager attention to what the teacher is doing that easily marks them as different from the children seen in the ordinary schools. The hands fly up as eagerly to answer the teacher's question as in the most wide-awake classes of the city's public schools.

To teach children who have never used language a sense of time in words is most difficult, yet while the writer was present, a small girl, who could not possibly have been over eleven, stood up and conjugated correctly our most irregular verbs, and did not stop until she had gone down to the participles. Another wrote upon the blackboard a spirited letter, telling how she liked her studies, and the composition, which was spontaneous, was really remarkable.

It is only when those who have been taught to articulate, speak, that one realizes, by their strange, explosive, vibrant voices that they must have sealed ears.

One of the strange features in their articulation is that it is taught, for the method used in all pupils is the same, although the voices vary in modulation and expression, just as is the case with people who have always had the power of speech.

The pathetic alertness of the children in the Kendall School in asking and answering questions of the visitors makes them singularly interesting.

"Imagine yourself a stranger in a strange land, speaking and hearing an unknown tongue," said Dr. E. W. Gallaudet, president of the institution.

"Conceive yourself stricken deaf. Can you fancy yourself learning the unknown language spoken around you? Think further; if you had been born deaf or became so at an early age, you could have no conception of what language is or can do. The intelligence of the little children who go into the Kendall School at six, and at eleven speak the English language intelligibly, with purity and precision, is remarkable.

"When the deaf and dumb child enters the Kendall School he has ideas, but only the signs of savagery to express them. He knows that moving the lips brings a responsive moving of the lips in the world around him. He is not conscious that he has organs of speech. This is the material that the teacher of the deaf labors over until the soul in the voice is liberated.

Trials of the Teachers.

"Our teachers who help to create voices for these afflicted creatures must have the self-abnegation of a nun and the capacity of the ordinary teacher multiplied many fold. They must have a personality that demands and holds attention. They must win from the children perfect faith in their wisdom and kindness, for the pupils literally hang upon the lips of the teacher. Without sympathy and wise devotion the work is killing, with them it is a difficult delight. One of the greatest delights is to hear the children tell of their experiences before they had speech. They rapidly press into use the new found words. Only an instructor of the deaf realizes the snares and pitfalls of the English language. Reformed spelling would soon add peace and pleasantness to the paths of the teachers.

"Over in the Kendall School the other day, a pitcher of milk was spilled in the

dining room. 'Milk' and 'spilled' were not among the words that had been learned. One little girl, equal to the emergency, however, cried out: 'The Cow fell.' She knew the milk came from the cow, and thought that explained the situation."

According to Dr. Gallaudet, the first days in the Kendall School are spent in happy recreation and in learning to be attentive. Attention is the keynote of such success as is attained by the pupils. The children have simple studies which teach them color, form and number, and from a collection of toys they learn the names of common objects.

The child soon learns to read his name from the teacher's lips and to come when he feels the vibration of the floor upon which the teacher pats to attract attention. The touch is trained by handling geometrical planes and solids, which he learns to identify with closed eyes.

"Feeling Vibrations."

"Feeling vibrations is nearest the totally deaf ever come to hearing," said Dr. Gallaudet. "In May last, after several encouraging preliminary trials, an alkoullion of the latest pattern, for use with three persons at a time, was purchased for the benefit of the students. This instrument with a graphophone attachment, and combining the principles of the microphone and the telephone enables many deaf people who can hear no ordinary sounds to enjoy music and to distinguish between some of the different sounds employed in speech. Some of the deaf with considerable hearing can understand conversation by the aid of the instrument.

"Whether or not those who have only enough hearing to distinguish a few sounds can be trained so as to understand words and sentences, we have not had sufficient time to determine. We are having constant experiments with the instrument with some degree of success. Much remains to be done to make it an absolute success, if it can be made so at all."

Teaching the deaf to speak is done largely by vibrations. Touch training is therefore all-important. The child is made to place his finger tips on the sounding-board of a guitar or piano and feels the difference in vibrations and judges the pitch of the voice of the teacher when a high or low tone is being played. The teacher sings a scale and the pupil judges the pitch by placing his fingers under the teacher's chin and measuring the vibration. In this way the pupil learns to control his own throat and chest when he speaks.

Pay Strict Attention.

The children of the silent world soon learn that by not paying attention they miss something. The teacher calls a child to the blackboard, and before the class draws his head, putting in the details of hair, ears, and eyes. The next child drawn has an open mouth with teeth and tongue. Then the children are given hand mirrors in order that they may find their own teeth and tongues. Other profiles are drawn on the blackboard with the mouth and tongue in the position that science has taught they should be to teach the dumb the first consonants they can most easily learn. The facial gymnastics undergone by the pupils to copy these pictures are really very amusing. The children stand before the teacher, one at a time, and imitate the positions she assumes in making the letters. Very shortly the letters are written before that part of the profile representing the mouth, giving the appearance of having come from it. The children take their next step in the language lesson by copying these. Gradually the pupil is led along like a person in a dark corridor, until at the end the scholar comes out into the light

The Gymnasium.

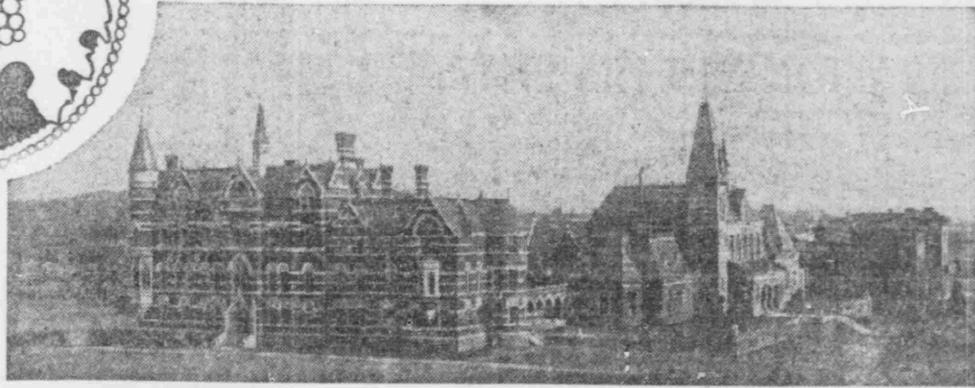
with the realization that she can speak and be understood by those with whom he wishes to communicate.

The pupils of the Kendall School are given a practical understanding and command of the English language, a knowledge of the principles of arithmetic sufficiently extensive to meet their needs in business transactions, a full course in political geography, and a reasonable course in history. Daily instruction in articulation and lip reading is given to every student who shows capacity for vocal improvement. Then, again, all of the pupils are given an opportunity of which many avail themselves—of preparing themselves for a course in Gallaudet College, where they receive the higher training of the ordinary college and university where unrestricted speech and hearing are in vogue.

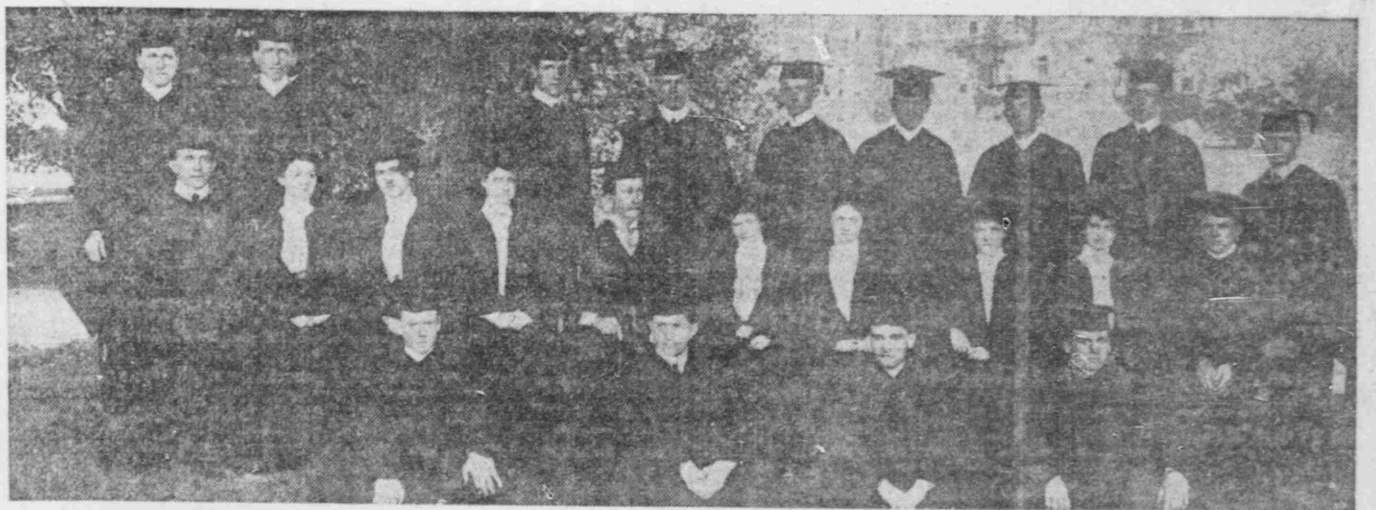
"More than 1,000 young men and women have received the training of the college and have proved by their intellectual development that deafness presents no obstacle to a very high degree of mental culture," said Dr. Gallaudet to the writer.

"The practical advantages of the higher education to these young people have been marked, as will be shown by an enumeration of some of the occupations which have opened to them in consequence thereof.

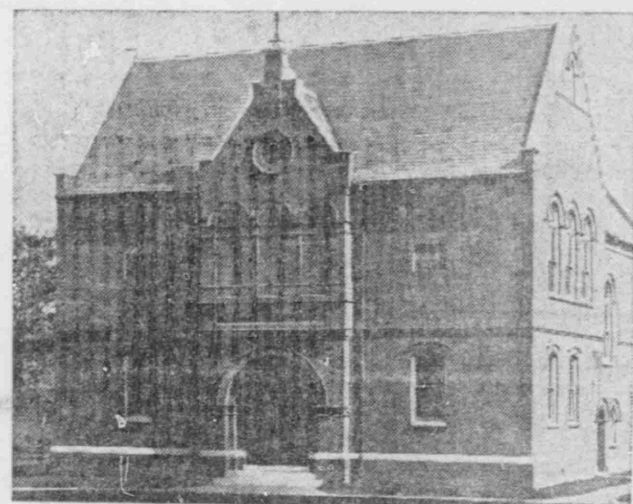
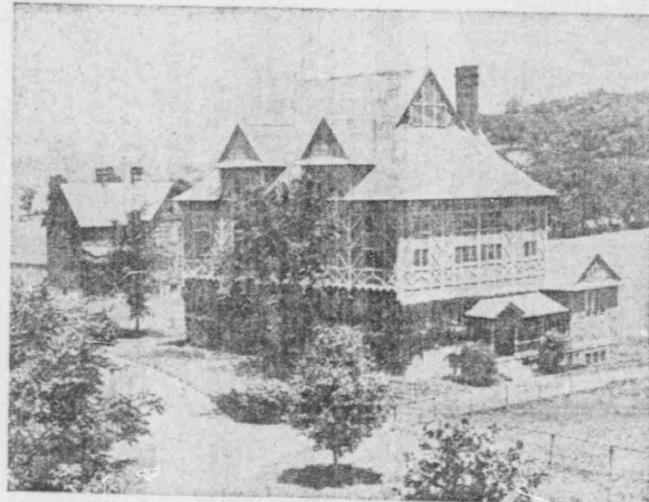
"One hundred who have gone out from the college have been engaged in teaching; 10 have entered the Christian ministry; 5 have become editors and publishers of newspapers; several others have taken positions connected with journalism; 25 have entered the service of the Government; one of these, who had risen rapidly to a high and responsible position, resigned to enter upon the practice of law in Cincinnati and Chicago and has been admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of the United States; one is the official botanist of a State; one, while filling an important post at a Western university, has rendered important service to the United States Coast Survey as a microscopist, and one is engaged as an engraver in the chief office of the survey. Of three who became draftsmen in architects' offices, one is in successful practice as an architect on his own account, which is also true of another, who completed his



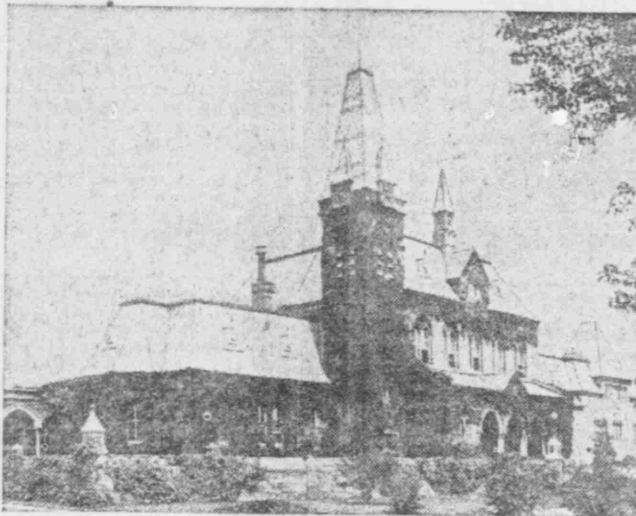
General View of the Institution.



Graduating Class, '02.



Kendall School.



Chapel and Refectory.

preparation by a course of study in Europe; one has been repeatedly elected recorder of deeds in a Southern city, and two others are recorders' clerks in the West; one was elected and still sits as a city councilman; another has been elected city treasurer and is at present cashier of a national bank; one has become eminent as a practical chemist and assayer; two are members of the faculty of the college, and two others are rendering valuable service as instructors therein; some have gone into mercantile and other offices; some have undertaken business on their own account, while not a few have chosen agricultural and mechanical pursuits, in which the advantages of thorough mental training will give them a superiority over those not so well educated.

Success of the Graduates.

"Of those alluded to as having engaged in teaching, one has been the principal of a flourishing institution in Pennsylvania; one is now in his seventh year as principal of the Ohio institution; one has been at the head of a day school in St. Louis; in Cincinnati, and later of the Colorado institution; a third has had charge of the Oregon institution; a fourth is at the head of a day school in St. Louis; three others have, respectively, founded and are now at the head of schools in New Mexico, North Dakota, and Evansville, Ind.; and others have done pioneer work in establishing schools in Florida and in Utah."

A normal department was established in connection with the college in 1891, since which time a large number of young men and women have been trained, many of whom had received bachelor degrees in other colleges, and were made masters at the conclusion of the Gallaudet course.

Every student is encouraged in the use of speech. The chief use of the sign language is in public lectures and addresses. The manual alphabet is largely employed in conducting the recitations of the class room, for the reason that it is believed to afford the best means of quick and accurate communication for work in which an entire class can take part understandingly.

"At the beginning of the last scholastic year the greatly increased demand for technical instruction led the college faculty to make a further step toward the establishment of regular technical courses," continued Dr. Gallaudet.

"It was agreed that students of good standing in the junior year might be allowed to pursue scientific courses, with the consent of their instructors, equivalent in requirements to the regular academic course, but leading to the degree of bachelor of science.

"In accordance with this new arrangement three young men took up the study of civil engineering, pursuing successfully last year the studies of analytic geometry, mechanics, descriptive geom-

etry, railroad surveying, French physics, political economy, international law, and esthetics.

"For their senior year, now beginning, they will be required to take German, psychology, differential calculus, strength of materials, geology, graphical statics, astronomy, and further work in surveying. On graduation these young men will be prepared to enter with advanced standing special technical schools for further study in their chosen work.

"Three young men, without leaving the regular course, took up agricultural chemistry as an extra study, investigating the nature of soils, etc., with a view of applying their knowledge later to scientific farming.

Studied Electricity.

"Three other students pursued a second year's course in electricity, taking up both in theory and practice the laws of magnetism, lightning protection, electric lighting, generators, electric motors, electric welding, electroplating, and other useful branches.

"There is no doubt that it is a great advantage for deaf students who wish technical training to obtain the founda-

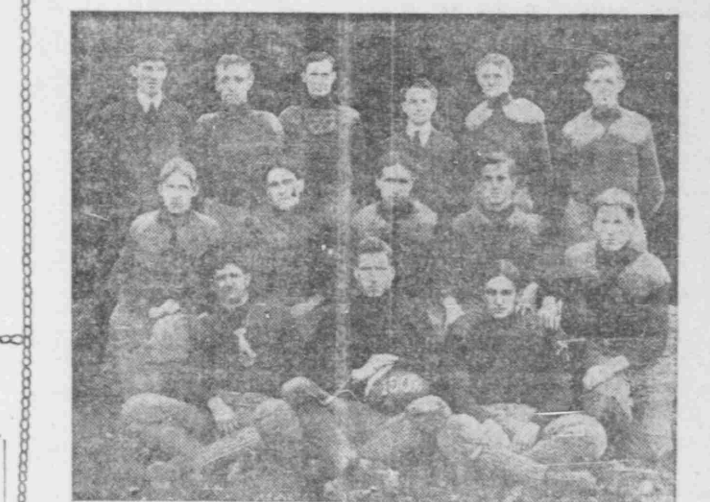
Great Difficulties Experienced in Training Young Children Who Know Nothing of the Rudiments of Articulation, to Attempt to Bring Into Play Their Previously Unused and Unknown Organs of Speech—Pupils Taught to Be Attentive.

tion for it under instructors who are familiar with their habits of thought and with their earlier education.

"It is felt that this work may be most valuable to the students later in life in choosing their professions and earning a livelihood, and that it would be almost impossible for them to obtain such a good foundation in so short a time elsewhere."

While the students at both the Kendall School and Gallaudet College spend a great part of their time in study, they have the same opportunity for physical culture and pleasure that are offered students in the various other schools and colleges of the country.

There is a fully equipped gymnasium, in which the students train every day, and in which there are regular classes in physical culture. A student professor teaches acrobatic feats and the writer was granted a treat in the gymnasium by seeing the students perform all kinds of acrobatic feats that are seldom seen outside the ring of a circus. The students appeared as much at home on the horizontal bars, trapeze, flying rings, and other paraphernalia of the "gym" as in the class room, while at boxing,



Football Team, '02.

wrestling, and bag punching they are very adept.

Golf, tennis, and basketball are indulged in by both the men and women students, while the football and baseball teams of the institution are of such high standard that it is seldom that either goes down in defeat. The record of the football team is especially brilliant. For three consecutive seasons they won the interstate championship from teams composed of players from Johns Hopkins University, the University of Maryland, and Georgetown University. Last season they defeated the crack Georgetown eleven after the latter had defeated the team from the University of Virginia.

The college mandolin, banjo, and guitar club is one of the features of the institution, and while the members cannot hear their own music, and in fact have never heard music, they give untold pleasure to guests at the college when the students have their evening entertainments for the benefit of their friends.

The young lady students are taught sewing and other household accomplishments, and after leaving the college frequently go into the manual training schools of the country, where they perfect themselves in a technical education,